

"You can herd buffalo anywhere they want to go." They wanted to go all over the Huachuca Mountains of southeast Arizona. A retired (tired) Army Officer takes on buffalo ranching as a hobby and "herds" his buffalo. His elderly mother chases a two ton buffalo bull and his cows with a Yucca stick. An attempted "herding" on horseback finds the rancher on the ground and his "experienced" cowpony a mile away. A young bull horns the rancher through a loop in his Levi's and carries him away. All a frivolous accounting of buffalo ranching in Arizona, circa 1980. The final pages provide a brief history of the times of the buffalo and how buffalo were introduced to Fort Huachuca, Arizona (1949) and then disposed of (1955).

To those who may have an interest in acquiring further knowledge of buffalo, the following book is of great value. THE TIME OF THE BUFFALO, Tom McHugh, Alfred A Knopf / New York, 1972.

# Buffalo Tales and Bison Tidbits



**Humorous incidents as a retired Army officer turns buffalo rancher in Southern Arizona, circa 1980 and History of buffalo, Ft. Huachuca, Arizona 1949-1956**

by  
Paul E. Kiefer  
United States Army,  
Retired (Tired)



MT WILSON NV OCT 13

TO: Peter Brueggeman. - Your visit here  
w/Herb, Deanna & I was a most  
happy, pleasant & fulfilling time.  
So many interesting pictures &  
stories of our Karold heritage were  
presented. So much to be proud of.

Thank you & God Bless -

**Buffalo Tales Paul**  
**and**  
**Bison Tidbits**

**Dedicated to my family  
and our many Apache  
Pointe Ranch friends**



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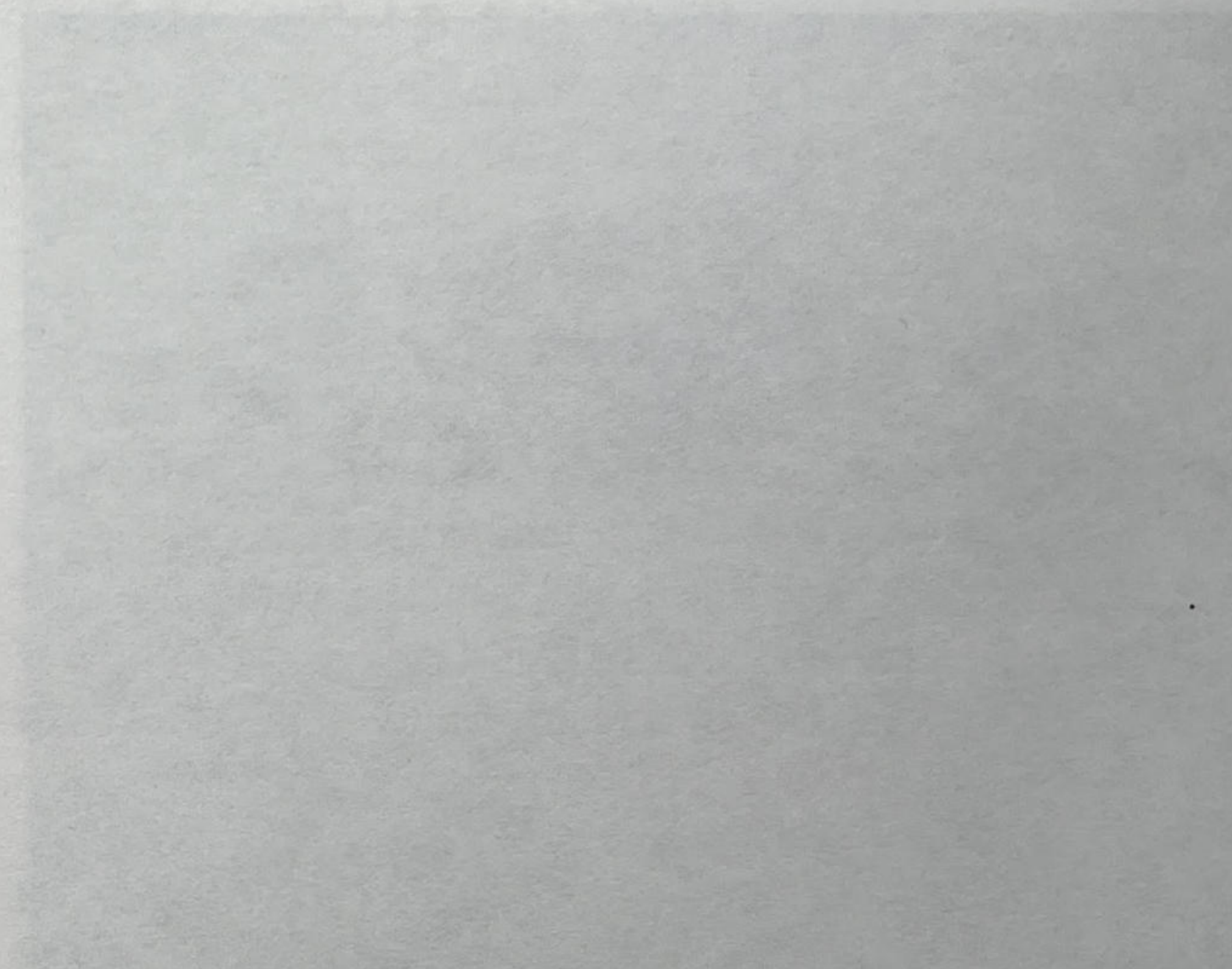
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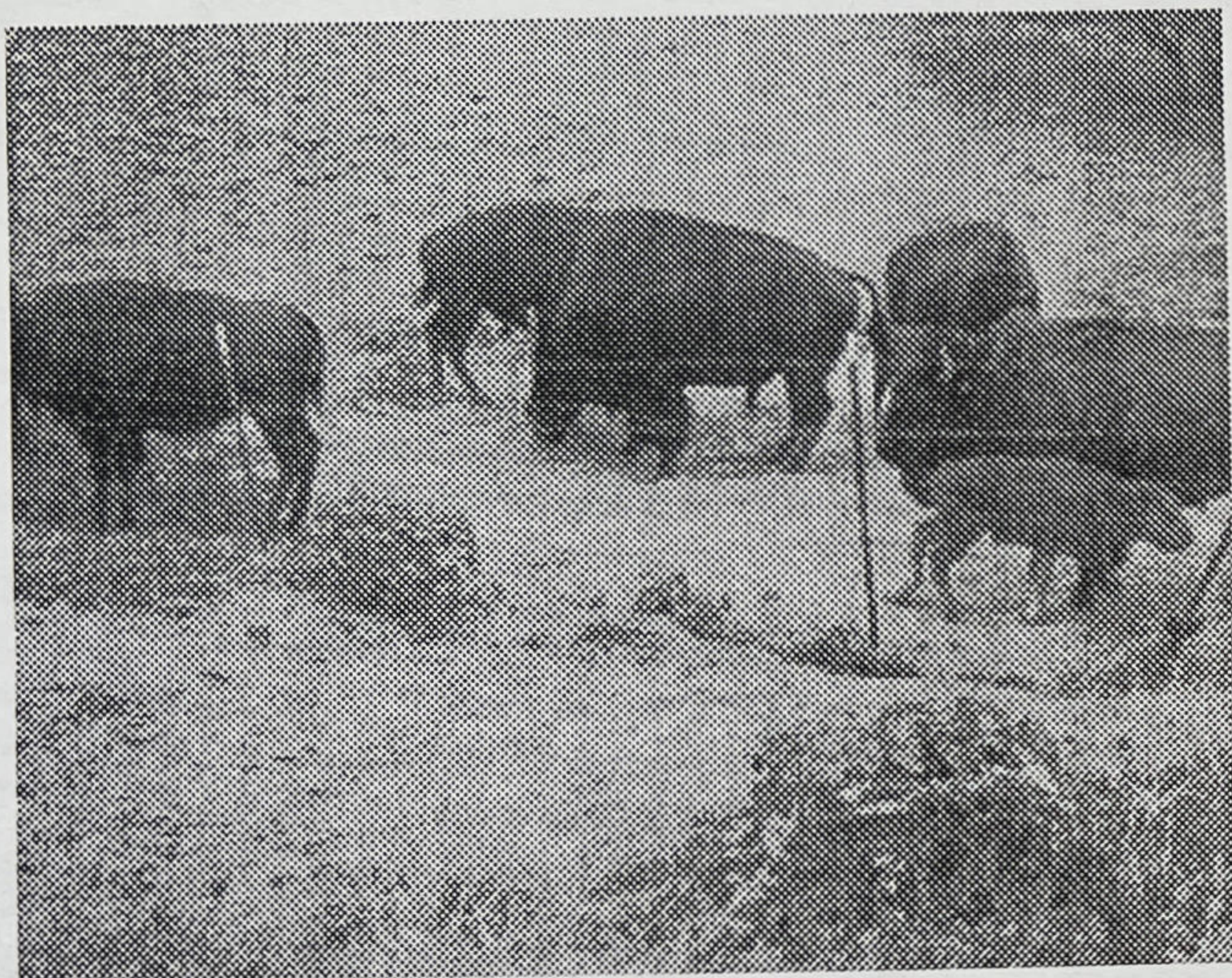
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## INTRODUCTION

One of the great Native American legends is that our Western







Apache Pointe Ranch  
Ramsey Canyon, Arizona

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most Native Americans is what our Western forefathers called Buffalo. That huge shaggy bovine that once numbered millions on our plains and was almost decimated, by the late 1800's, down to perhaps 100 animals. Our federal legislators balked at providing preservation laws and if it had not been for a handful of people and the influence of Theodore Roosevelt, the American Buffalo could have become extinct. Through the diligent efforts of a few conservationists, entrepreneurs and later some legislation, it is now estimated that there are over 100,000 buffalo in the Americas. You will find buffalo being raised in every state in the United States. They are intriguing animals and seemingly of interest to everyone.

The author of this little writing was born into a Dairy Farm family in Kansas and from the time he could walk, he was with cattle and came to respect all animals. Prior to entering the US Army in 1956, he raised many animals and birds for pleasure and profit. This set the stage for what took place upon retirement from the Army in 1977. More animals. On acquiring a small ranch in the Huachuca Mountains of Southeast Arizona, his buffalo ranching hobby began. One pitiful broken-down rusty fence encompassed the ranch, having no cross fencing. The buffalo were brought in to graze with the cattle and many humorous "ranching" events unfolded. Some just too exciting and frivolous to go unrecognized.



After telling his buffalo stories around the campfire, the author was encouraged to set them to print. It is hoped that these short stories will lend a bit of history and humor to their readers.

Of great importance to the history of buffalo in Arizona is what took place at Fort Huachuca, Arizona from 1949 through 1955. The second part of this writing condenses the history of the buffalo and ends with the story of buffalo at Fort Huachuca.

## NAME CLARIFICATION

Before I write one word about the majestic four legged animals that once inhabited the prairies and mountains of the United States by the millions, I must answer the first question between a viewer of bison and a bison rancher; What's the difference between a buffalo and a bison? Both terms are correct. Its all a matter of the where the words originated and the knowledge of the user. When the Spanish explorer, Coronado, crossed the plains in 1540, he saw a mass of "shaggy cows." Later, when our forefathers crossed the plains they named the same cows buffalo, the name by which they are commonly known. Their true name is bison, and is most correct since buffalo takes on a much broader derivation to include the water buffalo of Asia and the buffalo of Africa, etc.

As history has it, the American Bison passed to this continent from Europe over the Iberian Peninsula millions of years ago. The forebears of our bison are still prevalent in Europe and are called wisent. The bison in the United States reached into the millions of animals. The Native Americans depended upon bison to live and began depleting the population. With the coming of the Europeans to North America came the buffalo hunter industry and the herds were almost destroyed.

We are very fortunate to have had some environmentalists in our early American history take the bull by the horns and when our bison were nearing extinction (down to double digit figures) in the early 1900s, laws and men worked to save these animals. Today in almost every state



and within Canada and Mexico we have approximately 100,000 bison in ever increasing numbers. A beautiful and useful animal that has a history with which to fill many books.

A controversy began a few years ago over the most correct name buffalo or bison between meat importers and those of us raising our American bison for market consumption and breeding. At that time an importer of meat started advertising buffalo meat for sale which was really foreign variety rather than our United States and Canadian bison. To clarify terms and to promote native bison, The American Buffalo Association changed its name to The American Bison Association and advertising of native bison increased.

## HOW THEY CAME TO US

Each of us looks back on our lives at one time or another and says, Why did I do that? Surely I've asked myself, in periods of despair and elation, how in heavens name did I get into raising bison?

In my case, it was my experiences as a youngster caring for animals. I was raised on a dairy farm in Kansas until the age of eleven. As I was able, I was put to chores by my dad feedin and shovelin. My earliest recollection of cows was probably at about age three when I walked through the milking barn and my dad squirted fresh milk direct from the source into my mouth.

Due to health problems experienced by my Mother and me, the Doctor ordered my Dad to move his family to the dry climate of Arizona. He said my Mother had few years to live if we remained in Kansas. Dad had to sell his farms and livestock and moved our family, including my younger brother to the small town of Phoenix, Arizona. Fortunately the move was beneficial as Mom lived a full and joyful life and died at 82 years of age.

We ended up living in the Papago Park area of Phoenix. I had a burro named Jackson and a little quarter horse called Pronto and worked at a dairy. I lived with cattle and the dairy business thru the 40s and 50s as I attended grade school, High School and College in the Valley of the Sun.

During the Grade School days I was a member of a little school band and we had occasion to go by bus to some sort of shindig at a far away place below Tucson in the Sonoran Desert called Fort Huachuca. This had to be about 1949. As the bus chugged onto the Fort we were stopped on the road to await the crossing of a large herd of bison, my first real acquaintance with the beautiful beasts. I was young and impressionable and totally enthralled by these shaggy animals.

Then as a young lieutenant in the U.S. Army, I was commissioned an artillery officer and attended schooling at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. There I had several encounters with the bison, at the Wichita Wildlife Refuge adjacent to the fort. Again I was impressed.



Upon retiring from the Army, I felt I wanted my own life, no more bureaucrats. What better than a ranch where I could bring on all the worlds dudes for a good time. We bought a little old ranch of 400 acres in Ramsey Canyon of the Huachuca Mountains, just a few miles from where I saw my first bison at Fort Huachuca. One day I mentioned to my wife, Elaine, that it would be befitting if we had some bison on our spread to make it look more like the Old West. (I must mention here that the bison did not ever roam in Arizona and were not natural to this area.) Elaine was teaching school at the time and mentioned my idea to some of the teachers she worked with. During a coffee break one teacher read the classified advertisements of the Tucson newspaper and enthusiastically showed Elaine an ad stating "Buffalo" for Sale. Elaine told me and Wham!, we had instant "buffalo" at our steps. Hence the saga of the New West and an old soldier ranching the Old "Buffalo."

## FIRST DAY OUT

Arrangements were made with the seller of the bison in Tucson to deliver six animals to our Apache Pointe Ranch in Ramsey Canyon. Five cows and what turned out to be a huge bull named Bill. I was still on active duty with the Army at Fort Huachuca and could not be present for the delivery. I gave instructions for the route to reach us, which fences to cross and described the deposit point at the site of a windmill on the ranch.

At that time, 1979, the ranch was 400 acres with no cross-fences, catch pastures or corrals. Mile long fences on each side were of antiquity, sometimes only three saggy, rusty wires held up by rotten mesquite or oak fence posts.

When I arrived at the ranch after work, I rushed to the windmill to see if the bison had arrived. Sure enough there they were, staring at me. There were also about 20 head of cattle out there with them to keep the company and to make them feel at home. What now? Since they seemed happy and content at browsing, with plenty of water at hand, I decided they'd be OK and departed. You old time bison ranchers are already laughing, I know, right? The fun was to begin.

At daylight the next morning our telephone was ringing off the hook. It seems a neighbor rancher in the canyon had awakened to look out his window and view into ancient times. Bison in his yard? He immediately called the Sheriffs office and was told politely to go back to bed and sleep it off. He persisted and soon there were sirens and flashing lights, policemen, Deputy sheriffs, U.S. Forest rangers, game management, local press, etc. milling around the canyon.

It came to the fore that stories had been floating among the old timers for years that some of the buffalo that were removed from Fort Huachuca when it reopened in 1954, had escaped into the nearby mountains never to be seen. Now 25 years later it seemed they had descended from the Huachuca Mountains. I really had not said much to anyone about acquiring these animals as it had been a spur of the moment purchase, but evidently I had mentioned it to



someone at the scene who told the authorities to contact Kiefer. That's when the telephone started blaring and I rushed to the scene, in my military uniform, enroute to work. You can imagine my embarrassment and concern as I searched for words and means to get the bison back on the ranch. I herded them back by myself and cut a new hole in the fence, told the bison to behave and went to work.

## BIG BILL AND HORSEBACK

I have a collection of paintings of bison and a couple of them show the Indians riding horseback along side a herd of bison shooting arrows. As I was soon to find out, this must have taken some dedicated training, certainly more than the average cow pony has.

One day shortly after he arrived at the ranch Big Bill (at 2000 pounds plus), Daddy of the herd, decided he wanted to visit some female cattle on the adjoining Newman ranch. As big as he was, he could go where ever he pleased. He pushed through the fence and found his way to the cows. As no one was available to help me bring him in, I decided to select our best cow pony from our trail ride string and herd him in by myself. I had selected old Patches, a seasoned gelding roping horse who had spent his entire life with cattle.

Old Bill was along the fence line apparently thinking about going back to his own herd, but he was not at the

place where he had broken out. I decided not to try and push him too far and I cut the fence down near where he stood. I tried to hasten his return by herding him along the fence through the new gate to our property.

I circled broad around him and approached him slowly so as to drive him along the fence. I sensed Patches being a little nervous (of course, I wasn't) but we had a job to do so I nudged him to about 20 feet from Bill. Bill never moved an inch; he stood his ground and glared at us. Patches had stopped and even with my urging, would not get any closer to Big Bill. Bill lowered his head with a slight shake and kept his eyes on us. Time was moving extremely slowly, when Big Bill, still never having moved, gave out a big, loud grunt.

Patches must have thought he was about to be killed and never moving a foot, reared straight back, almost over backwards. In a flash, I was on the ground and Patches was racing across the flats as fast as he could gallop with a saddle under his belly. Evidently, when he reared he sucked in his gut and the saddle turned under him throwing me off. I was quite humiliated and mad as Hell. Big Bill just stood there with a what seemed to be a bison grin and watched me get myself together. I picked up a stick and saying a few choice curse words, hollered at Bill and waved the stick. I guess he figured he had caused me enough trouble and politely turned, walked down the fence line to the new gate and sauntered off to his harem.

I repaired the fence and went to find my great cow pony. I found him about a mile away, as far as he could go, at the corner of the Newman ranch. His saddle was still under



his belly, torn and scratched after crashing it across the terrain. He was still breathing hard and was quite lathered up. I settled him down and led him home, never again to try moving bison with a horse.

When our trail riders wanted to go see the bison I would let them, as long as they did not approach closer than 100 feet. I really didn't want to pick a bunch of dudes up off the ground and chase after their horses. Later, when the bison ventured off the ranch, I was asked why I did not use our horses to go after them. I just smiled and said that it was easier on foot.

## FEEDING BIG BILL

Into the winter months it became necessary to haul in hay to feed the bison on our ranch, as the summer growth was soon depleted. I had a small barn out in the bison pasture where I stored the hay. I would drive my pickup out there and throw out hay to the bison as they gathered and waited for me.

One day as I was in the barn Big Bill came up and pushed the barn door closed with his huge head. This door was the only way in or out, as there was not even a window. Big Bill kept his head pressed against the door grunting and snorting and would not budge. I beat on the door and hollered as loud as I could to get the attention of someone to come to my rescue but no one could hear me as my

voice was stifled within the barn. Through all this commotion, Bill never moved.

I would guess that he kept me in the barn about 30 minutes. When he finally backed off I wasn't too sure I wanted to venture out and test his temper any further. I opened the door slightly, quickly threw out some hay and then, even more quickly, sneaked out of the barn. I felt like a whipped puppy as I jumped into the bed of the pickup to safety.

Another time as I was feeding the herd I had backed the pickup up to the barn to unload hay when Big Bill and his harem arrived to assist me. Apparently I wasn't getting the job done fast enough and Bill wanted to help. He decided he could get the hay off the truck in one full swoop and crashed his horns into the pickup and lifted. He didn't succeed in dumping the truck over, but did raise the back of the pickup and push it sideways a few inches. On a ranch you always need help, but not exactly that way.

I was told a story about loading bison onto a truck at Fort Huachuca. It seems a fellow had purchased a nice bull and needed to haul him to his ranch. He had loaded the bison into the back of his truck which allegedly had a very strong welded pipe enclosure around the bed. After loading the bison the fellow decided to wait overnight before he began his journey home. He left the truck for a short time and upon returning to his truck found it demolished and the bison long departed.



## GRANDMOTHER IS HERDER WITH A STICK

My mother, age 78 at the time, was visiting us from Phoenix, enjoying the cooler weather and loving her grandchildren. My wife and I were still working our eight to five jobs, leaving Mother in-charge. In those days our house was about a mile from where the bison were kept, with all the property in between being ours.

Mother, as stated previously, was a lady born and raised on a farm in Kansas in the horse and buggy days. She had raised cows her father had given her from calves and was allowed to sell these animals for her own profit. Mother was conversant with our bison situation and knew well of their wandering habits.

On this particular morning the bison had decided to take a stroll through a couple of fences **by breaking them down** and arrived on the mountainside near our house. Mother saw them and knew they should be on the other side of the mountain in their pasture. She was a small lady, about five foot five, but all tiger. She went out in the field and found herself a Yucca stick (cactus stem). She set out waving her stick and yelling, "Bill, get out of here and get on home!" After a little chasing, she managed to set the bison off in the direction of their pasture.

When I heard the story of this aged lady chasing a 2000 pound bison Bull and his harem around the mountainside I was quite upset, thinking of the danger she had put her-

self in. But to Mother it was nothing more than just doing what you're supposed to do.

## YOUNG BILL AND THE ATV CHASE

One fine sunny afternoon after a beautiful rain had come and gone, a yearling bull, "Little Bill," managed to break out of his pasture. He was loose in the main commercial area of the ranch. I tried to gently guide him back to join the herd but he was a cantankerous young bull and not at all ready to give up his freedom. After a few hours of this activity I went for my game tranquilizing rifle. I put a light dose of tranquilizer in the syringe and went hunting.

Whenever I had to use a tranquilizer, I worried that I would use too much because too strong a dose can kill an animal. I took careful aim and popped a dart into his fat little hindquarter, then let him be as the serum does not take effect immediately. After about 15 minutes I decided to herd the bull, certainly much calmer after the effects of the tranquilizer, to the pasture where he might lay down and sleep it off. Well, was I ever wrong... That varmint looked at me with red eyes and his tail in the air as if to say, "Come on boy, lets have at it!" I waited a while longer and he finally seemed to become a little woozy so I tried to drive him again, to no avail. He just ran off a ways and looked at me again. Evidently, the tranquilizer had the opposite effect on that little bull. He never did feel the effects of that tranquilizer enough to be herded calmly back to his pasture, but just kept running. I must have walked



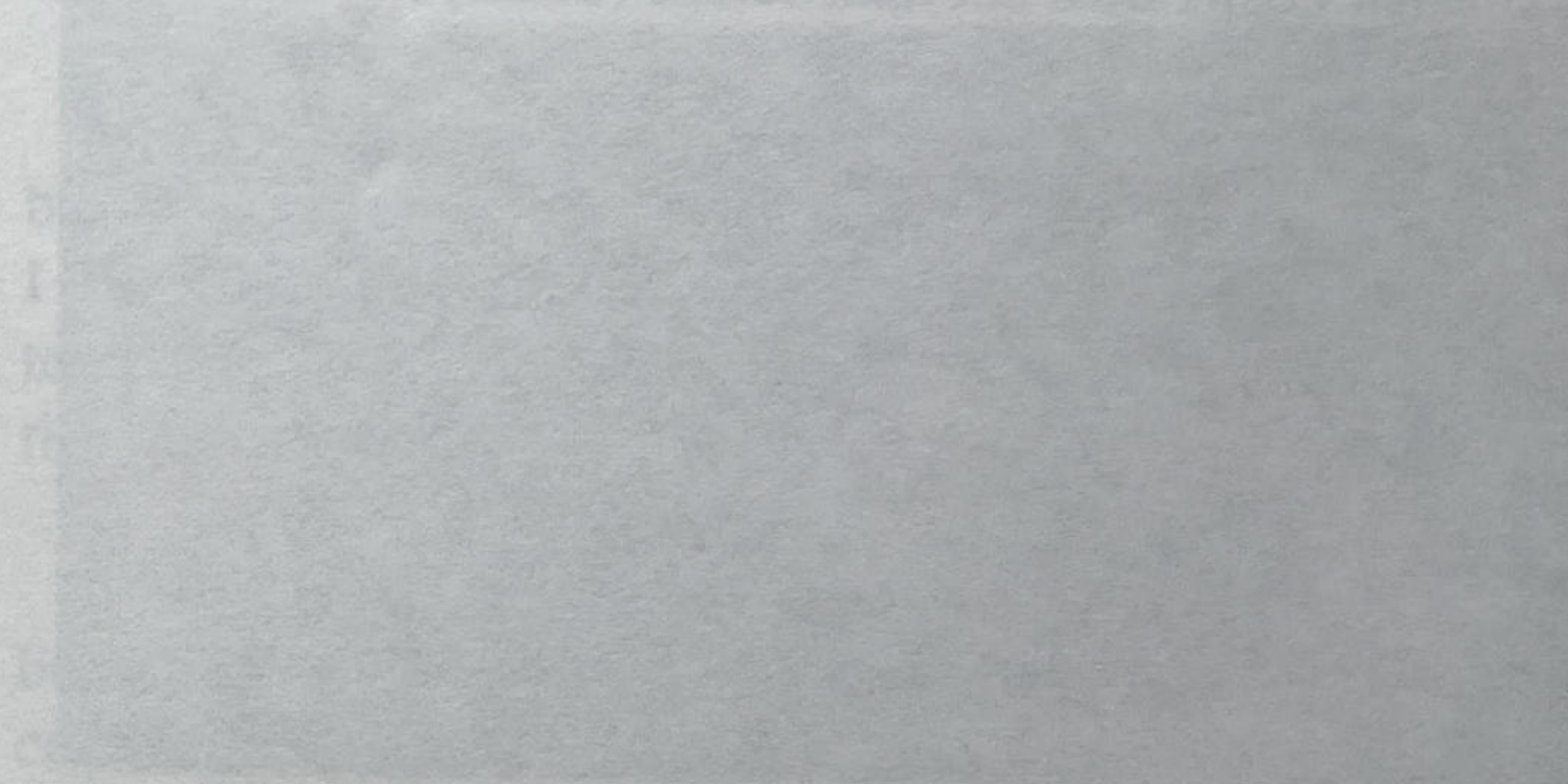
miles in a ten acre area trying to get that bull back where he belonged: round and round we'd go and I could never keep him in the direction of the gate. I was getting exhausted and feeling even more frustrated.

Then, I had an idea of the perfect way to herd bison. I had just the previous Christmas purchased a 3 wheeled Honda ATV for my wife and remembered how fast I could get around on it. I got the ATV and the chase was on. Away we went, over the fields, through the washes, between the buildings and round and round again.

If I had wanted to test the endurance of a bison I'm not sure I would have chosen this method or this location. What a fantastically strong animal! By now it was evening with saloon and restaurant customers arriving at the ranch. They weren't expecting to see a show but they got a good one featuring a madman driving a red ATV and chasing a brown blur. Customers got their drinks, came out onto the front porch of the saloon and watched the show. It seemed, after the second or third time around, that the viewers were rooting for the bison, which made me even more frustrated at the whole situation. Finally, with some fancy driving for the benefit of the crowd and some good luck cornering the little bull, the mighty little animal was finally secured.

## WHAT A BISON BULL LIKES

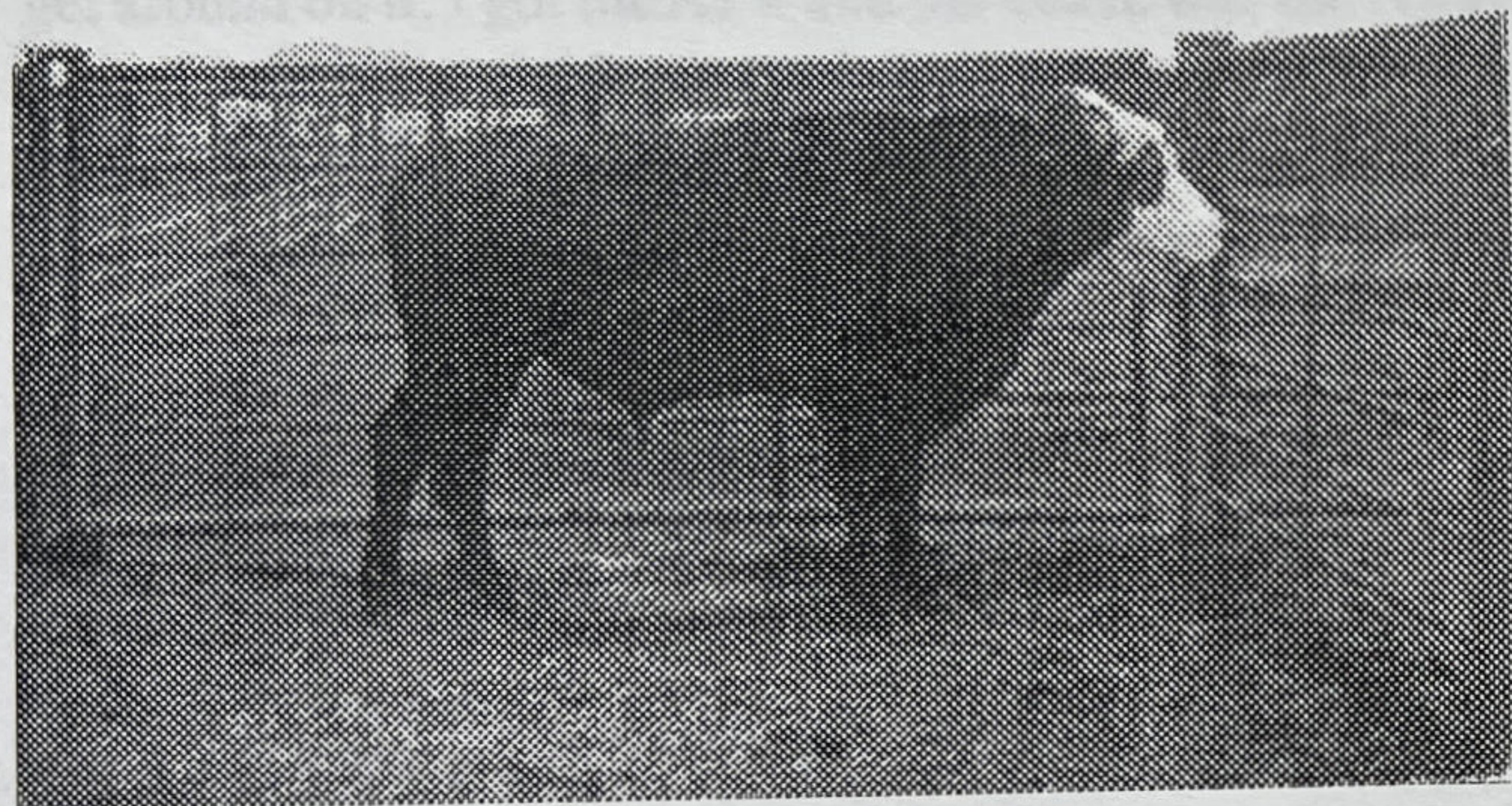
Big Bull, as he was called, was our first head bison. He was a very little bull and would often jump the fence to visit the domestic cattle next door. They would corner him to their side of the fence by running along the fence line to full view of him. He would also visit our cattle in the field next to him. I sometimes thought he loved the red, white, orange and tan (brown) better than his own black, brown and white.



We have a lot of bison bulls and cows. One bull is a very little bull and would often jump the fence to visit the domestic cattle next door. They would corner him to their side of the fence by running along the fence line to full view of him. He would also visit our cattle in the field next to him. I sometimes thought he loved the red, white, orange and tan (brown) better than his own black, brown and white.

If you wish to see a bison bull in a field, you will have to go to the field. The bison bulls are very little and would often jump the fence to visit the domestic cattle next door. They would corner him to their side of the fence by running along the fence line to full view of him. He would also visit our cattle in the field next to him. I sometimes thought he loved the red, white, orange and tan (brown) better than his own black, brown and white.





"Half and Half"  
Beef momma-Bison daddy  
"Crazy Wild"

## WHAT A BISON BULL LIKES

Big Bill, as he was called, was our first herd Daddy. He was a very virile bull and would often jump the fence to visit the domestic cattle next door. They would entice him to their side of the fence by running along the fence line in full view of Bill. He would also visit our cattle in the field next to his. I sometimes thought he loved the red, white, orange and tan (bison) better than his own Bison harem.

I had read that around the turn of the century there had been several attempts to cross bison with domestic cattle. I was assured by the boys that should know, that these attempts had been unsuccessful and that Big Bills association with the cattle would be to no avail.

Well, the experts were wrong. In spring, two of the most beautiful half and halves were born from our cattle. Both calves were born almost within a week of each other. One was born of a Black Angus mix and the other from a Hereford mix. One heifer, obviously the offspring of the Black Angus, had a soft velvety looking coat of brownish black and a white face. The other was the most beautiful; it was a golden short hair with streaks of black through it. The streaks were similar to that of a Zebra but were in blended streaks. The calves were beautiful to see, but were very difficult to get close to. The older they got the crazier and wilder they became.

If you think maintaining bison on a range is a chore, you'd be only half right. I'd take 50 bison any day rather than work with those two half breeds. They could not be



rounded up easily like cattle or even with some difficulty like bison. In some ways they seemed like Elk; fast, wily and wild. No matter how I tried, I could not contain them. My only option was hunt and kill them as one would hunt Elk.

In preparation for the hunt, I went to Bisbee where I was told of a butcher who might be able to handle the large supply of fresh meat we were going to get. He agreed to help me and in preparation, brought his four wheel drive to the ranch. We caravaned in together to the bison pasture so we would be able to quickly get the meat back to be butchered.

Of course, being the wild creatures that they were, they were not on my ranch but I was able to locate both run-aways on the adjacent ranch of the Newman family. I contacted the Newmans and asked their permission for a "Bee-falo" hunt. The hunt went well and the meat was most excellent and favored by everyone.

I tried to save the skulls for posterity and had them drying when some good friend, I'm sure, borrowed them. I was able to keep the coat of the striped heifer. It is a beautiful reminder of those two wild and crazy animals.

## Family and Friends in Pursuit, With Comments

As I have related, several times during the first years we had the bison they were in and out of their pasture, obviously not with our liking or "consent."

This always led to getting a small herding expedition together and making a retrieval plan on the best way to get the bison back to their own pasture.

As I look back on those days, I wonder about the impact of missing bison on our business. We worked hard to have patrons visit our Steak House restaurant and saloon. We wanted them to come and enjoy our hospitality, eat some excellent food and share some good times. However, some of these folks probably didn't come out as often as they may have liked from fear that they would be called upon to chase bison over the rugged Huachuca Mountains.

I will relate the activity of one of these expeditions as it probably was the longest, hardest and had a different ending than most. Late one fall afternoon I was informed that the bison were missing. Two things during those ranch days turned my adrenaline flow to 100 percent. One being, "We have no water" and the other, "The bison are loose." Our herd at this time numbered 17 healthy and vigorous animals who enjoyed wandering about and seeing if the grass really was greener on the other side of the fence.

I rushed to the pasture and sure enough, no bison. As it was towards the end of the day, I decided to get a roundup posse together for the following morning. I noted that the



direction over which the bison had departed was into the deep canyons of the Huachuca Mountains. With such difficult terrain and the large number of animals to round up, it would be quite a task. I started a telephone exchange, and asked all of our saloon patrons, family, friends, ranch hands, et. al, to assist bright and early the next morning.

Like a good ole military operation I set up teams of people to "scout." People were stationed on the ridge lines and hogbacks to signal to the others with instructions to "gently" turn the animals toward the ranch if they could.

I proceeded with a group to a ridgeline directly to the South of the ranch. As we reached the crest of this ridgeline, an amusing incident occurred. I was completely surprised when I encountered two bow hunters in a blind. They were completely camouflaged and evidently very professional. They were as surprised as I was and looked upon my group with apparent disgust for interrupting their hunting plans. I was in full blown pursuit of my bison and had little time for small talk. I blurted out, "Have you seen my buffalo?" With a hearty reply one of the bow-hunting party said with contempt, "No, have you seen our deer?"

I slowed down enough to catch my breath and said, "No but if you see the buffalo give us a holler." Then I and my group quickly headed down the other side of the ridgeline. The bow-hunters could only watch us scramble away and wonder where we came from or where we were going. These bow-hunters later became our very dear friends and we have had many laughs about how we met.

About the same time, in Carr Canyon, beyond where we met the bow-hunters, my wife, Elaine, and a friend of ours were driving slowly along the canyon road searching the hillsides for bison. As they drove along a couple of folks on horseback approached. Elaine stopped the car and asked the riders if they had seen any Buffalo. The riders were evidently completely taken aback by the question. They must have thought they had a couple of drunks or crazy people to contend with and wanted to get out of the situation as quickly as possible. They said, "No, not since the Indians left" and galloped off.

The day wore on as we searched the canyons and the mountainsides. Finally about mid-afternoon I was following a fresh track and expecting to see bison any minute. As I proceeded down a rocky hillside I was zig-zagging around and in-between some very large and bushy evergreen trees. Sometimes several trees grew together forming a large wall. As I stepped around one of these tree walls I came face-to-face with a large cow staring at me not 10 feet away. Right behind her was the rest of the herd.

Living with these beautiful creatures on a daily basis you would never expect I would "panic" at the sight of them. There is something about these large, shaggy, beautiful beasts when seen at close hand in the wild that puts your mind on immediate caution and your body moving backwards. I vividly remember freezing in my tracks, my body seeming momentarily petrified with fear, as if I had come upon the devil himself.

Well, we looked at each other in amazement for what seemed like minutes, but which I'm sure was only sec-



onds. Then the cow turned and ran off, the rest of the herd following her up the mountain. In a bit they were half a mile away. Although I was in fairly top physical condition at this time, the stress and strain of climbing up and down these canyons at a mile high altitude had caused my legs to turn a bit "rubbery." The rest of the herders were also feeling the physical exhaustion of the chase.

It was now about four hours until sunset so I gathered the tired herders together for the final drive home. Knowing that we were headed back to the ranch, our spirits were lifted and a "can do" attitude carried us onward. We turned the herd in the right direction and sallied forth through the canyons and over ridges and had them heading right toward their ranch pasture.

The night before, I had prepared a new and more secure pasture for them with a strong wide gate. I had baited the gate with fresh alfalfa hay (which they love) and had strewn it out in a path from the outside of the gate and through into the new pasture. The trap was set. As we came off the hillside with the bison moving peacefully along we had them within some 250 yards of the gate. It was going to be a beautiful return.

At that moment, a very fine young man and a dear friend of my sons and our family, came over the adjacent and parallel ridgeline directly to the front of the herd. Of course he had no idea what had been happening and so he waved and yelled a hearty "hello." The bison saw him, took heed to his yells and did a 180 degree turn, running back through us and off the ranch!

At this point we herders had had it, especially myself. We all headed for the saloon and a drink; it was all over. This was just one of many chasing expeditions over the past years I had endured and I didn't care if the bison ever came back. I was through chasing them, forever. This was to be the end of my bison adventures.

Over the next few weeks, the bison were seen several times on Forest Service land. I told the Forest Service to do as they pleased with the bison as I wanted them no more. If something didn't work out they would have to be killed. Maybe the bison somehow knew of their impending doom because a couple of days later, while I was about doing my morning chores, I glanced toward their old pasture and there they all stood looking at me. Although I had been resigned and somewhat relieved by their absence, to have them back again was even better. I quickly gathered some alfalfa hay and tempted them toward the new pasture and gate, successfully getting them "secured." As much as they had upset me they were still my friends.

I guess they were a little more domesticated than they were wild and favored the good life of plenty; plenty of easily obtainable food and water and maybe even plenty of my daily comments of tender loving care. Perhaps they also liked the comforting noise of our weekend dinner dance hoe-downs to keep them company in the dark.

That was our last major breakout, even though in some places, I still only had some rickety old three wire fence to contain them. People always asked how I was able to contain the bison and I really believe in my response. Just keep them happy with plenty of food and water and as free from



major confrontations as possible. We've had thousands of people come to view the bison, and the bison rarely the paid them any attention.

## CALVING MIDWIFE

A healthy bison bull and his productive cows are sure to increase their herd by one calf for every cow per year. My cows always produced one calf per year and where the scary part was that this started for most of my bison heifers at age two.

One year I noticed two of the young heifers start enlarging along with the old cows and carefully watched their pregnancies progress. All seemed to go well for them. As the older cows started dropping their calves I watched these two youngsters more cautiously and told others to inform me if it appeared they were about to deliver.

One day I received an out of breath message with, "They're having trouble delivering." I ran to the pasture, followed by a committee of 10-15 people who stopped and hung onto the fence as I clambered through to the gathering of the herd about 20 yards from the fence helpers.

It was a most vivid scene that I shall never forget. The herd at this time was about 15 animals and they were all milling about like Daddys in the delivery waiting room. The two heifers were standing doing all they could to allow the babies to come forth into the world. Mind you,

both heifers were birthing at the same time. I was afraid that the bulls and cows would take offense of me as I approached. Such was not the case. They all moved into a semicircle around the two heifers as if to say help them. Feature that the semi-circle faced the fence watchers and the heifers had their delivery room toward the fence helpers. The fence helpers not yet having the incentive to come into the pasture with me.

The babies feet were projecting a few inches beyond the womb so I grabbed hold as best I could. The heifers responded doing their part and the tug and push and grunt routine began, then happily ended with a beautiful baby on the ground. I took the next heifer in (rear) tow and again a beautiful baby bison appeared. The cleaning and licking began and I slipped quickly away and back through the fence to the cheers of the fence helpers. It was a lovely episode in the life of man and animals.

## BULL SHOOT

Over the years I advertised for sale a bull now and then as you only need one bull with a small herd such as I had. I advertised either for sale as breeders or as harvest. One story of a harvest I will relate, although I dislike this part of the business. The only good part is the most delicious and healthful meat in the world.

Old Bill was a monster. He stood over six feet at the hump and weighed well over a ton. He was a handsome



animal but getting meaner and meaner each month and with my three-wire rusty fence and lots of visitors to our ranch, I decided he best leave the scene and give a younger bull a chance.

This became known to our local (Sierra Vista) Rod and Gun Club, who, with the partnership of the Tucson Rod and Gun Club, offered to purchase Bill as a game collector trophy. They were to have the head mounted by a member Taxidermist and then offer the head through raffle ticket sales to earn money for their clubs. The latter was also accomplished by selling the meat. An agreed upon price was sanctioned and I allowed only to sell if I killed the animal. I was afraid of a firearm incident on the ranch.

The clubs agreed that I should do so and at the appointed time they would assemble at the ranch, observe the kill and haul off the carcass. (I didn't want it dressed out on the ranch with all the visitors to witness.) The Gun Clubs had arranged for a monster truck with a boom hoist to be on hand ( a truck that hauls large concrete septic tanks.)

I have been an expert marksman all my life and taught hundreds of men and women in the care, marksmanship and safety of firearms. I was also coach of the University of Arizona Rifle Teams during my assignment there with the Reserve Officer Training Corps. I relate the preceding words about my qualifications to handle firearms, as I am about to relate a story that to this day has me ashamed of myself.

I have a collection of rifles and shotguns and in reading about the buffalo hunters and their big-bore, long-range

rifles, decided I wanted one of those buffalo rifles as part of my collection. About two weeks before the shoot Bill event, a fellow dropped by the ranch to sell me a 45/70 buffalo killer rifle. It was not an antique, but a near-new single shot weapon, like just out of the showcase. Ammo was supplied with it and I was ready for something. Well, then along came the situation to kill Big Bill and I thought this weapon would be just the thing.

On a beautiful weekend morning the Rod and Gun Club members arrived, maybe ten of them, and we proceeded to the bison pasture. I had earlier fed the bison their morning alfalfa ration and they were milling about. The club members stood behind the fence at my rear. I positioned myself so that the trajectory would avoid any living thing down range from where the bison stood. Now, again in my behalf, I must state that I had never fired the rifle about to be used. As I stood facing the bull, I inserted a cartridge and allowed the rifle to settle in my right hand with the bore pointed at the ground to my side as I waited for the bull to turn sideways to me. As the appropriate time to fire arrived I simply released the safety and raised my right arm to bring the rifle to firing position. I had my trigger finger on the trigger in a ready position. As I raised the rifle only the slightest touch was on the trigger, however, unbeknownst to me the rifle had a hair trigger pull and as I raised the rifle about halfway to the firing stance it discharged into the ground.

Dear Reader, you can never imagine my embarrassment as to my rear standing at the fence line were probably some of the best riflemen in Arizona. I dared not look back at them in embarrassment. I quickly loaded another cartridge,



keeping my finger away from the trigger this time; took careful aim and put a round into the bulls front heart area. This 45/70 has a bullet about the diameter of a dime and looks like it could knock over a barn. I know I hit the bull just right but he just stood there and looked at me. I was concerned about what he might do and quickly inserted another cartridge in the chamber in readiness. I did not put on the safety as I was ready for a quick shot in case the bull charged. The bull was now shaking his head and I started to raise the rifle again and boom I did the same damn thing again.

At this point I almost withered away or wanted to run away from my embarrassment. I still had a bull at bay so I stood my ground. Then the bull slowly settled to the ground and died. Now it was time for me to run for the barn, but of course I couldn't. So I had to discretely turn to the Rod and Gun club members on the fence and lament to them my terrible exhibit in the use of a rifle. They were quite polite and just kind of grinned when I mentioned the hair-trigger problem. I thanked them for their courtesy but can imagine the stories that followed about how a retired Army Colonel shoots.

The bulls feet were chained together and the boom truck brought in. The boom was extended and the boom cable winch dropped a hook to lift the bull. The operator, thinking the bull's weight not sufficient to require the extension of the outriggers, hoisted the bull and the truck front-end went up and the boom went down. It was thus verified that our estimate of over a ton of bull bison was obviously correct. The boom was pulled in and the carcass brought to the edge of the truck bed and just off the ground. In this

position the truck left the ranch with the bison dangling behind it.

I can imagine the astonishment of vehicle operators as they approached the rear of this truck as it proceeded down the highway. Later in the day one of the men who assisted in the dressing out of the bull came to tell me of my accurate aim, as I had actually shot into a part of the bulls heart. This again reveals the strength and survivability of bison, for it was some minutes after having been shot in the heart that the animal expired.

Big Bill's trophy head was beautifully mounted and brought to my place for exhibit to assist in raffle ticket sales. The head fully filled about one-third of the bed of a long bed pickup. The head is now on display in the home of a Sierra Vista resident. This story was a tough one for me to relate and I again thank the Rod and Gun Club members who were present at the Buffalo Shoot for their courtesy and discretional behavior.

## SELLING TWO YOUNG BULLS

Over the years I have collected Old West Memorabilia as I found it. I brought together a couple of acres of old mine carts, wagons and wagon wheels, old car parts and a lot of good junk. The word of my junk ranch traveled widely and I was often approached by other collectors asking to purchase some of my goodies.



One day a fellow introduced himself as Fred, from Tucson and asked if he might browse around through the area and look for wagon wheels. Of course this was fine with me. He returned shortly and asked if I would sell some of the old wagon wheels laying around. I should have told him I rarely parted with anything before he started to browse. I told him no. We entered into conversation about this and that and then to bison and if I had any for sale. I then learned that Fred was in a business similar to mine, west of Tucson. The place was called Fred's Arena and he had Draft horses that pulled wagons for patron hayrides. As for the bison I said yes, I had some two year old bulls for sale. He asked if I had a matched pair and I again said yes, I had two born within hours of each other. To this Fred replied he had always wanted to train a pair of bison to pull one of his wagons and asked if I would trade two bison for two Draft horses. Well, I know how much those big Draft horses eat and I already had a string of about 10 trail ride horses to feed. I said I would sell for cash only. We made a deal and he said he would be back in a week or so to pick them up.

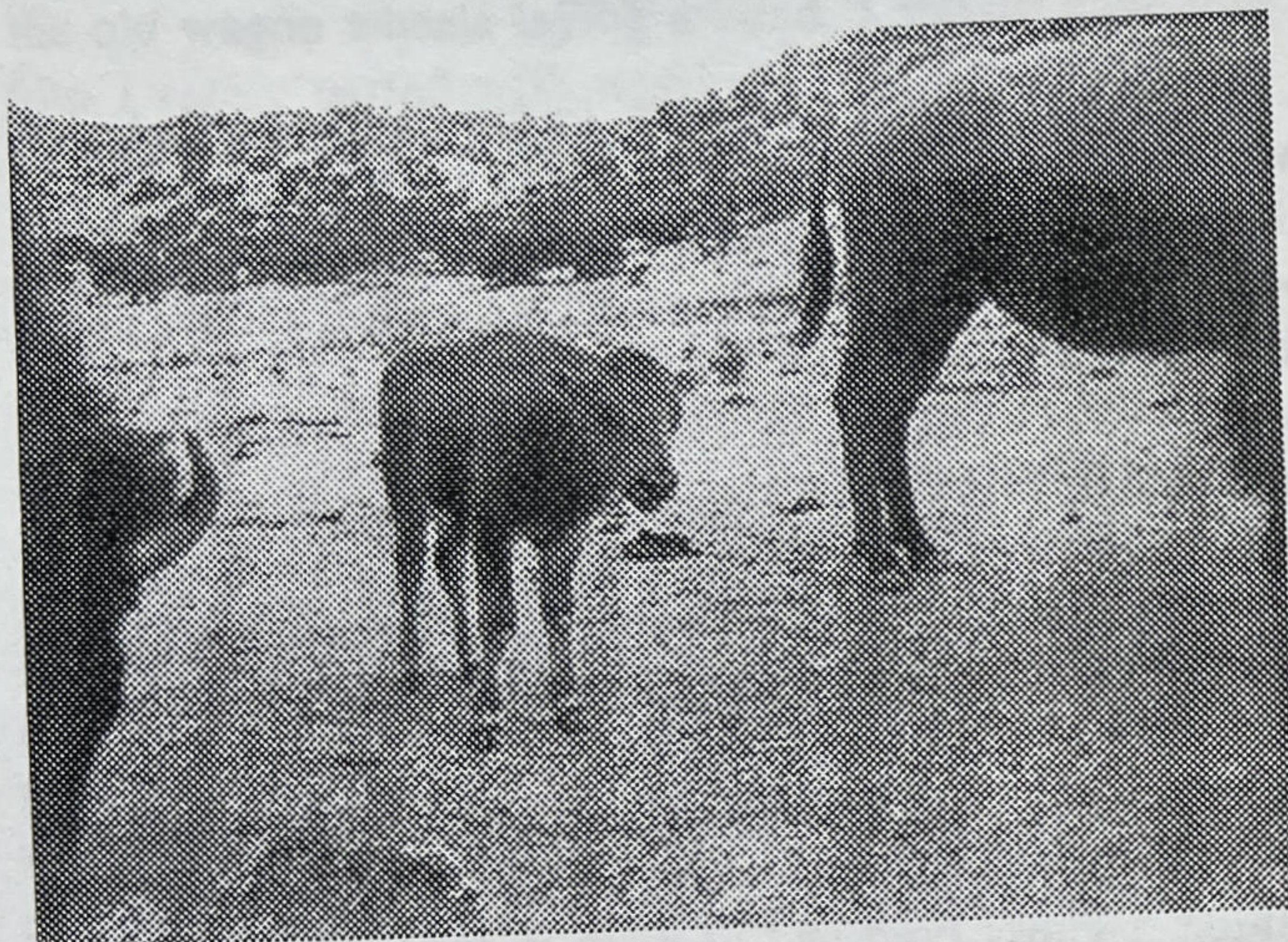
If you have ever had anything to do with loading and transporting bison you will appreciate that it takes, first a lot of good luck, but also proper loading chutes/equipment and a strong truck or trailer panels. As I had no serviceable elevated loading chute I cautioned Fred to bring the lowest (to the ground) stock trailer he could find as we would have to load directly from a corral into the transportation vehicle. He said fine and that he understood the problem. Well, I'll be blessed if he didn't show up with a 3/4 ton stake bed truck, which if you know of which I speak, is about three feet from ground level onto the bed. I was

flabbergasted. How could we load onto this? Also there was only the approximately three foot high wooden stake siding around the bed of his truck. He did however bring two strong halters and lead ropes.

When I said luck, we had it. To this day I can't believe we did it, but with the truck wheels in a low place we were able to pull, push and coax those critters up into the truck bed. Fred securely tied each one to a side rail and we proceeded to my saloon for a cold beer. Fred paid me and I was nervous as hell with those two young bulls standing out there in that open truck. Fred said he understood and would get them right on to Tucson. Well, feature this. A few days later I mentioned to one of my friends about how those bison were loaded out and how worried I was about their welfare. My friend replied, Oh, you shouldn't have been worried, I saw those bison parked in front of a saloon in Tombstone and they were doing fine. I could have fainted. I guess Fred had decided to have that next beer and instead of taking the direct route to Tucson from my place, he had taken a round about way over winding, arroyo type terrain to Tombstone.

I later was told that one died after getting an infection through the castration incision. So I guess he never got his bison team in action. Reading about some of the old timers, I learned that bison teams had been trained to pull, only later to turn on their masters, in one case killing him. So be it for two little bison bulls in Tombstone. I can imagine the stories Fred might have been telling in the Tombstone saloons, perhaps about a chase, roundup, etc.





Baby bison  
Apache Pointe Ranch

## SELLING A BABY—BISON

A fellow by the name of Spence and I worked in the same organization at Fort Huachuca before I retired. Spence was a good friend and he often dropped by after work for a brew or two in my saloon on the ranch. One night we were swapping lies and hoisting a few when Spence began talking about his young boys, at that time probably 10 and 13 years of age.

The boys and family lived in Stump Canyon near the National Forest and had plenty of area to get into trouble. Spence complained he needed to get his boys interested in some project to keep them out of trouble. The lie swapping led me to telling a couple about bison. At this time I was about three sheets I guess, for I roughly remember the following.

As I talked about bison, Spence thought... "why not? Why not let the boys raise a bison?" He related this idea to me, I guess, and got me to promise that when the bison calved in the coming spring I would sell him a calf for his boys to raise. I forgot, or never remembered about this deal until several calves were on the ground. Spence came by and said he was ready to help me catch a baby for his boys. I said What? He said You remember your promise don't you? Wow! Was I in trouble. Of course I honored my deal and we began a plan to capture a baby. I think there were five two-three week olds running around out there and I mean at that age running.



I recall the first born on the ranch... I saw the calf drop and was elated and ran to the house to get a camera. When I returned about fifteen minutes later, the cow and calf were at least a quarter of a mile from the delivery point. The little calf following its mother at a trot. Such hardy animals; That's how they survived in the wilds.

Anyway, the point was how to capture a baby. I took several twenty foot steel fence panels and erected a trap/gate affair and laid ample alfalfa hay inside to attract the herd. Then the idea was to quick close the gate on a mother and calf. This went on for several evenings to no avail, as they knew something was up with us around. So I told Spence we would lay off sticking around when they ate for a few days and gradually work our way back into their presence. This worked and we swung the gate on a mother and a calf. What an idiot. The calf simply slid thru between the panel bars and ran off laughing. So I let the cow out and the next day lined the panels with square mesh wire so they couldn't jump through. Now another week of trials.

But talk about intelligent animals. To this day I consider the bison at the top. Those mothers were on to what we were up to... namely capturing one of their babies. So they put their intelligent heads together and figured out how to beat us. They wanted to eat the nice green hay, but allowed as how they should not take their babies with them. Some would stay up on the hillside with the brood while the others would go and get hayed. Then they would trade off and the baby sitters would come to get hayed. The babies stayed on the hillside.

Of course I was furious with them but obviously whipped. I almost gave up but told Spence I would try to catch the runaways sometime and I'd sell him a calf if I should succeed. Leaving them alone was again beneficial and one evening I succeeded in closing the gate on a baby heifer. I really didn't want to sell a heifer as that's how you increase your herd, but by that time I allowed as how this was probably my last chance to fulfill my deal. We caught the little critter and Spence took her off to Stump Canyon for his boys to raise.

This little heifer became "Buffy" and the love of Spencers family and dogs. Yes, I said dogs. Buffy got the run of the place to include the dogs' backyard kennel. Buffy really got to like the dogs' food and ate with the dogs and grew and grew. The family could pet her all over and treated her as a family pet. The boys did a great job but knew to keep their distance when Buffy got to playing hard.

In my deal with Spence I had made a sales agreement that if they should ever have to get rid of Buffy, she was to come back to the ranch. Very tragically Spence and his wife were divorced and could no longer keep Buffy. She was brought back to the ranch and as she was so tame I put her in a special pen near our restaurant/saloon so people could see/pet/feed/ her.

Unfortunately I was so busy that I did not spend time with Buffy to carry on her domestication. She grew wilder and wilder and needed a companion. I brought in a young bull that was near her age to keep her happy. She about went crazy... What's this thing in the pen with me? And what with this sniffy-sniffy nose at my rear? This thing



was named "Buford" by my niece and so we had Buffy and Buford at close hand for the public to see. I never put up any signs to say not to pet or disturb the bison and I heard some horror stories as the months slipped by about crushed arms and hands.

Buffy proceeded to ignore Buford's advances and ran circles about the pen. I guess at night things calmed down a bit as in the spring Buffy produced her first calf. I was watching for the event and had made up my mind to get Buford out of Buffys pen before she delivered. Too much was happening and I didn't get it accomplished. One morning I went out to feed and a beautiful little orange female calf lay dead in the pen. I think that Buford had never seen a calf and after it was delivered thought his pen had been invaded by something and had battered the calf to death. It was quite traumatic and distressing to me, holding myself responsible. More about Buffy and Buford in the next article.

## ADVENTURE WITH BUFFY AND HER ANCESTORS

During the latter years that I raised bison, the little domesticated calf, that was returned to me after its owners could no longer keep it, became the star of the ranch. She was named Buffy by the folks who domesticated her. I suppose there are numerous Buffy's in our herds across the country but I dare say our Buffy has more stories surrounding her existence. She was a show quality animal of

excellent configuration, head and horns, with her granddaddy being Big Bill, our original 2000 pound sire. As the bison were unique to my business, I always liked to have a couple near our commercial enterprises, for patrons to see at close hand. With Buffy coming back to the ranch I felt she would be ideal for such, so I prepared a small enclosure for her near the restaurant. As such she was always an attraction. I would go, almost daily, in the pen with her and she learned to know my voice and loved to have me scratch her on the head and on her sides. However, as I previously mentioned, never at any time trust a bison as you may have a horn in you in a split second. I do believe that bison are as quick as any hoofed animal in the world and I've had some big bruises to prove it. Buffy loved to play with me when I fed her or cleaned the pen... I really felt she meant friendly play... but with a horned 800 pound animal, I must assure you I jumped the fence many times as she tried to be friendly. I put the little bull, Buford, in with her and this made me double trouble. They escaped their pen a few times at night and as naught they would find their way to my bedroom window and mill around and grunt to let me know they "loved me." Usually they were no trouble and with a handful of hay and an open gate I could get them to follow me back into the pen. One afternoon when all was quiet I was in the company of two gentlemen who were staying on the ranch in their RV's. All of a sudden I see Buffy running around in the restaurant parking lot. Then I saw Buford pushing on a partly downed gate about to escape also. I ran quickly and got Buford secured in his pen but Buffy was really "showing her oats" a happy animal to be out and running. I always thought it was "no sweat" in dealing with Buffy and was confident that I could easily get her back in the pen. I did



my hay-in-hand trick but she would have nothing to do with me other than run circles around me. She was really in high spirits. So now what? I asked for my RV friends, Jack and Lee, to assist... They were very reluctant if not really scared to do so. My plan was to "calm" Buffy and get near enough to where I could drop a lariat over her horns. With the lariat attached to my jeep I could safely pull her back into her pen. I asked Jack and Lee to close Buffy in with me. As I approached Buffy I looked for my friends to be moving with me. I think they decided I was a damn fool and they wouldn't budge an inch as I guess their feet were in concrete. So I proceeded toward Buffy with hay in one hand and the lariat in the other. Buffy seemed "calm" and she even stepped toward me as I approached her. Ah, good! Then in an instant she put her head down and charged me (of course a playful charge). I dodged the best I could but not fast enough. The following would have made a great home video for the TV show. As usual, I was wearing a pair of Levis with no belt and I guess Buffy felt my Levis were too low over my buttocks and wanted to help me pull them up, for as she charged by me she hooked the side belt loop picking me up in the air and carrying me across the parking lot and depositing me on the ground. Wow! What a ride and it was evidently a fun ride as my RV friends were laughing their back sides off. I regained my composure and finally succeeded in roping Buffy by the horns and pulling her into the pen. I have been told I should repeat this scene for filming as I would surely win a prize on TV and perhaps even the Levi-Strauss Company could get a little "strong" advertising. ( I weigh 265 pounds). No thanks!

Let me digress a little and relate a couple of fun incidents with Buffy's ancestors. Since automobiles/trucks are "fortresses" against large animals, it is interesting to note certain bison destruction of these fortresses. I previously related Big Bill's pushing my pickup sideways but with only minor dents. Once while I was away from the ranch it became the responsibility of my son Eric to get the escaped bison back in their pasture. He didn't relish chasing them on foot and decided to chase them with his car. End product was a junked car. Then there was the night that Big Bill and crew decided to visit a local bar in Carr Canyon. It was dark and a lady strolled out of the bar to her car, started it, threw on her headlights and there in her lights stood humongous Bill staring at her with blazing eyes. She was really terrified... Was it a real good drink or was that a monster about to get her? She rammed the car in reverse but in great haste to get away backed over a large rock and destroyed her rear axle. I found out about this sometime later when I was threatened with a lawsuit. Now for the best use of vehicles in herding bison. It became necessary to move the herd from one pasture to another, however there was about 300 feet of open area between the gates. If the bison got into this open area they could escape from the ranch. I came upon a plan to keep from building a fenced runway between the pastures, Since I collected antique (junk) cars and had several sitting around and as there were family cars and employee cars, why not just make a "chute" of cars from one pasture to the other. I got everyone to start moving cars into two columns, leaving a 20 foot path between them for a bison chute. I received some very questioned stares when I asked for the assistance but everyone pitched in their car. We got the bison moving pretty fast as they filed out of their pasture and down the pathway of



cars. It worked beautifully. My wife helped me herding a few times in her blue Toyota, but never got it hit. I think it would be more fun to move the bison like the big ranches do it now, with helicopters. Yea!

Now as my dreams of a successful Recreation Ranch drew to a close, it was necessary to move Buffy and Buford to a mountainside pasture. Once I decide to do something I usually move quickly and on this particular day I decided to move Buffy and Buford myself. With other people around the bison exhibited nervousness and were more of a problem. I needed to move them approximately a quarter of a mile. Again I felt the ole rope over the horns and the jeep were the answer. I got the jeep in the pen (by the way this was no ordinary jeep. It was modified with a large V8 engine, oversize tires, etc.) and tied the lariat to the roll bar. My plan was to rope Buffy and with her in tow I knew Buford would follow. Also I really didn't want to rope Buford because he was getting quite large and somewhat mean.

Well it so happened that Buffy figured what was up and did a lot of side stepping. If you have handled large animals you know you must act at a precise moment or your advantage is lost quickly. What happened was that Buford walked perfectly in front of me, so I dropped the lariat over his horns instead of Buffys. After a little "rodeo" time I opened the gate and with Buford in tow started for the pasture. Buford also made a decision. It was that he was not going with me and the jeep. I often recall with childhood happiness the story of FERDINAND THE BULL and remember how he sat on his rear under a tree watching a Butterfly. Well, Buford decided to be Ferdinand, He sat

down on his haunches and with his head in the clouds, would not budge. I said OK, have it your way but we're going anyway. The jeep was strong so I started off in four-wheel low with wheels spinning. Buford just skidded along on his butt and looked dignified, his front legs plowing up the earth in front of him. This went OK for a couple of blocks but then came the disaster. I had to cross an arroyo over a conduit bridge that dropped off on each side into the arroyo. As I approached at an angle, Buford didn't line up with the crossing and down he went into the arroyo. There I was with a bison Bull stuck in the arroyo, sitting on his buns with a taunt rope to the non-moving jeep. What to do? Panic! I saw the lariat start to snap and unravel with all the strain on it. You know the feeling? Quickly I grabbed another lariat and got it around one of Buford's horns and secured it to the jeep. Saved! Now Buford was panting with his tongue hanging out and had his neck twisted so that he was not breathing properly. Would I kill him? But how do you move a 1400 pound bison Bull, keep the rope taunt and drive the jeep by yourself? This all flashed through my feeble brain but Buford came first, so I grabbed a large fence post and started prying up Buford's rear in an attempt to get him up. After some life crushing heaves, I got him to struggle to his feet. I quickly ran for the jeep and before he could get his balance I had him moving out of the arroyo behind the jeep and into the pasture. Buffy just looked amused and followed us all the way. For several months Buffy and her family were in this pasture and I was frequently at one end of the pasture or the other. Buffy always ran to be near me. At one time I lived in a temporary situation with a mobile home near one end of Buffys pasture. Buffy always slept as near to me by the fence as she



could and awakened me every morning with her grunts to tell me to get her breakfast hay.

On January 23, 1993, I was forced to sell Buffy and her two female calves that were with her. One calf, Buella, was going on two years and the baby, Erica, was going on one year. I asked my son Kurt to accompany me to the bison pasture just before this sale so I could have him take a last picture of Buffy and I. So now the parting love shot. As my son was poised to snap the picture, I held out my hand to feed Buffy some hay. She took it in great stride, hooked me in the abdomen and left me with a huge bloody bruise. They are beautiful and intelligent animals, smarter than me and I hope to put together another bison Ranch soon so I may have some more stories for you.

## THE BISON OF FORT HUACHUCA 1940-1954 A BRIEF HISTORY

The bison of Fort Huachuca were the last of their kind in the United States. They were the last of their kind in the United States. They were the last of their kind in the United States.

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Buffalo herd  
Fort Huachuca, Arizona, 1952

## THE BISON OF FORT HUACHUCA 1949-1954 A BRIEF HISTORY

Before relating the story of bison at Ft. Huachuca, Arizona, a brief history with some historical information on bison should prove interesting and educational.

Buffalo, hereafter will be referred to correctly, as bison. Bison have been traced to the Pleistocene epoch in North America with primitive bison unearthed near Peking China. Then through another million years, the Pleistocene epoch Ice Age, bison further spread out over much of the Northern Hemisphere. Our American Bison evolved from the steppe "wisent" of Europe and passed over the Bering Strait land bridge to our continent.

The European wisent, species name, bison bison bonanus, closely resembles the American Bison, species name, bison bison bison. As a ruminant, bison fall into the family Bovidae. Traits that separate bison from other bovines are their singular appearance, certain peculiarities of their skull structure and their 14 pairs of ribs against the 13 found in cattle. Chemical analysis can also determine a difference in blood structure.

Scientific investigation supports the proposition that bison can cross with other bovine species, in particular with domestic cattle, humped cattle and Yaks. In all of these crosses, the male offspring are sterile, preventing further breeding of a line of hybrids. Both European wisent and American Bison have been similarly persecuted by man.



By the end of the Middle Ages, wisent were exterminated from most of their original range in France before 1400, in Austria and Hungary during the 1500's and in Germany in the 1700's. WWI and WWII nearly decimated the wisent. In Poland, as the Germans retreated in 1918, their herd was left to the mercy of poachers. Within a year nearly every wisent had been slain. Four years after the slaughter an official census revealed that there were only 67 wild wisent left in the world, all of the descendants of individuals given to zoos and wildlife preserves by Nineteenth Century Czars.

Conservationists intervened and by 1939, the surviving wisent had increased to 100 animals and a new herd of 16 had been reestablished in Poland's Bialowieza Forest. In WWI this area was occupied by Russia who forbade the killing of wisent on penalty of death... only one animal was shot, a crime for which three Soviet soldiers were executed. When the Nazis invaded the area the preservation of the Bialowieza wisent was again assured. Herman Goering personally owned four purebreds. Even Hitler took a interest in the Bialowieza wisent, and ordered several transferred to Berlin.

The suffrage in the United States was similar. When the bison population was at its height, the animals moved in herds of hundreds of thousands across the plains. Native Americans depended on them for their existence and culture. The Native Americans devised many ways to kill the bison; by natural traps such as bogs or blind canyons, running them over precipices, etc. as well as constructing various types of enclosures and entrapments. The by-products of the bison slain by the Native Americans was an endless

list. The array made the bison a total department store, builder's emporium, furniture mart, drugstore, and supermarket rolled into one... a splendidly stocked commissary for the needs of life.

Not only did the Native Americans have an impact on the numbers of bison but nature also took a toll with recurrent natural disasters. In 1867, a herd of 4000 bison attempting to ford the Platte River in Nebraska walked into the channels of quicksand at the waters edge. As animals in the rear, ignorant of danger, pushed the lead animals onward... hundreds of bison slipped from the banks and sank into the quicksand. By the time the remnants of the herd reached the opposite shore, over 2000 bison lay mired and dying in the riverbed. Thousands of animals, their fate clearly documented in historical narratives, have perished in river, fire and storm as well as from disease. Then came the "Sportsmen" hunters. The last two bison East of the Mississippi were killed in 1832, yet the species still roamed by the millions over the plains. There was nothing to keep hunters from swarming into the Western Territories to reap the harvest. First came the "Sportsmen" along with the "hidehunters." Thousands were killed as for the "sport" of it and left to rot. Buffalo Bill Cody came to fame as a meat hunter for the railroad. He started at \$500 per month which was a great deal of money during his time. In 18 months he said he killed over 6000 animals. Bison hides sold for \$1.50 or so with train loads of hides shipped East and to Europe. Between 1872 and 1874 the Railroad shipped 459,452 hides. The final revised figures marketed hides revealed at least 3 million bison were killed for this purpose alone during 1872-73-74. Native Americans killed an



estimated million plus and white settlers some 150,000. This puts the three year kill figure to over 4 million bison.

As the herds were decimated a new enterprise developed; hundreds of people became "bone-pickers." Some made more profit than the hidehunters. Bison bones brought an average of \$8 a ton. (The price fluctuated between \$2.50 and \$22.) To help the weight, bones were soaked with water increasing the weight by one-fourth. Horns and hoofs brought more—from \$6 to \$30 per ton. The train loads of bison bones estimated at the height of the trade provide an appalling measure of the slaughter. Perhaps some 200,000 bison left the plains as bones ground up for fertilizer or bone char used for purging raw sugar liquor of its brown coloration, etc. The total decimation of the herds was at hand.

In 1874 federal legislation to curb the slaughter was passed but vetoed by President Ulysses Grant. State legislators put forth an effort to curb the slaughter but to little avail. Small private herds were established such as that of "Buffalo Jones" in Kansas, his herd later sold to others. Many people were concerned and in 1905 with the support of Theodore Roosevelt the American Bison Society was formed and a benevolent congress in 1908 appropriated 8000 acres in Oklahoma and 15 selected bison from the New York Zoological Society were sent to Oklahoma by railroad in horse cars. Thus became the first federal bison range. (Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge).

The American Bison Society proposed a second refuge in Montana of 29 square miles. It was readily accepted on 23 May 1918 and signed by President Roosevelt. With these

and other conservative efforts such as Yellowstone Park, Wind Caves National Park and Custers State Park, etc. the bison were saved from extinction.

In 1930 the American Bison Society published its last report. The rescue of the species had been accomplished. Additionally, over the years, many efforts by private growers, usually assisted through the organizations of the National Buffalo Association and the American Bison Association saw the bison population (including Canada and Mexico) to be around 100,000 animals. In 1909, after experiments to cross bison with cattle turned out unsuccessfully, 15-20 animals remained at House Rock, Arizona, being the property of an old cowboy, Uncle Jimmy Owens who had worked for Buffalo Jones. Owen's herd had increased to some 98 head by 1927. The children of Arizona raised \$10,000 to purchase Owen's herd and the Arizona Game and Fish Department administered the herd from that time on.

With this background we will now see how the bison of Southern Arizona at Fort Huachuca figure in the history of the species. Fort Huachuca is nestled in the foothills of the Huachuca Mountains just a few miles from the Mexican border and is at 5000 foot in altitude. Fort Huachuca was established as a camp for Calvary and Dragoons in 1877. Adequate water and grassy rolling country lie to the North, South and East. Fort Huachuca has an exemplary history from Indian fighting, Pancho Villa chasing, WWI and WWII training missions. The "Buffalo Soldiers" were made famous here in their exploits as Calvary against the Apaches. Fort Huachuca was deactivated after WWII and its lands relinquished to the State of Arizona. Although



modern day bison were never indigenous to Arizona the State Game and Fish Commission determined Fort Huachuca would be a good environment to propagate the small Arizona herd.

In May of 1949, a total of 114 head were brought to Fort Huachuca from the National Bison Range, Yellowstone National Park and from Arizona's House Rock Valley Ranch, just North of the Colorado River. At first the Ft. Huachuca herd was kept as one herd, but soon split into three to facilitate control by the herders hired to care for them and to prevent overgrazing. In growing numbers, they inhabited the East, South and West Ranges of the fort. The rapid growth of the herd was too much for the land to bear. In 1952 the bison population on Ft. Huachuca was 450 and was considered excessive. It was determined that the herd should be no more than 200 for proper grazing management. Therefore the Arizona Game and Fish Department authorized a "hunt" for 250 bison at \$25 each for State licensed hunters. A drawing was held. This hunt was held from January 26 thru February 3, 1953. A Mr. Ralph Morrow, of the Arizona Game and Fish Department was in charge. The "hunt" was conducted in a large enclosure now called "Buffalo Corral" where the Fort now has a horse stable. The bison were released near the selected hunter for a sure kill. The head, hide and a forequarter were allocated to the hunter and the remainder was sold on a drawing/permit basis to those who desired a quarter of bison meat.

In 1953 the Army Signal Corps, which was at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey and desired a new location with better weather and an environment with the least electronic

interference possible. Fort Huachuca was selected and re-opened in 1954 as the Army's Electronic Proving Ground and under the Command of Major General Lenzner. With major electronic testing programs and expanded facilities, the 77,000 acres of Fort Huachuca was too small for bison and testing. The bison had to go.

An incident at that time related by a Fort Huachuca Staff Officer is as follows: "General Lenzner told of the day in late 1954 when he was advised that a large bull had fallen into a water hole and could not get out. The General went out to see what was going on and found a few men trying to pass a rope or bridle sling under the bull so it could be lifted out with a hoist. But this just couldn't be done and the bull was getting angrier and the troops more cautious... more scared by the minute. But something had to be done. Lenzner sent for a large bulldozer and told the operator to fill the hole. This he did gradually, pushing dirt down on the top of the outraged animal, which promptly shook it under foot. Before long it was apparent that the bull would soon be out. The troops scurried up into their big truck, ready to move out as soon as the General jumped aboard. But the bull jumped out a minute sooner than expected, took one look at the truck and hit it broadside with his rock hard skull. He backed off a few paces and hit it again, with more damage and almost knocking it over. Lenzner said that at that point he wasn't sure just what might happen next, but fortunately the bull noticed a few of his kin a few hundred yards away and trotted off to join them."

A resident of the area related, "A rancher who was to move a few bison away, brought in a truck suitable for cattle. He was told that it wasn't nearly strong enough, but



all he would do was add a sheet of plywood. He finally got one bison loaded and tied it in the truck for the night. Next morning the truck was a pile of smashed and splintered wood and twisted metal, and no bison in sight."

It was explained then that what finally caused General Lenzner to conclude that the bison had to go, had to do with the use of variable time artillery fuses that caused the artillery shell to explode overhead. Bison would surely be killed by such explosions and the Army would never hear of the end of it. Therefore the second "hunt" was organized, to remove the herd from Fort Huachuca, with as many as possible relocated elsewhere. This turned out to be a transfer of 39 head to Arizona's Raymond Ranch (the Game and Fish Department's bison range near Flagstaff) with 15 or 20 being sent to the State of Sonora, Mexico. Perhaps two or three bison escaped to the mountains. Stories were related many times of "stray" bison being seen in the canyons of the Huachuca Mountains. There were no verified sightings for years, until the excitement in 1979 when the Kiefer's bison "descended" into Ramsey Canyon, as described in the first section of this book.

A mounted head of one of the Fort Huachuca bison may be seen in the Fort Museum. The museum is a masterpiece in describing the most interesting history of Fort Huachuca and the Southwest and is well worth a few hours' visit.